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Achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, as well as implementing the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits: progress made, challenges and opportunities

Statement submitted by People's Decade for Human Rights Education, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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The Millennium Development Goals as human rights learning: building the capacities of the claim holders through learning as empowerment

The achievement of the Millennium Development Goals will for the most part depend upon the awareness of all members of the human family that they are legitimate claimants of inherent dignity and inalienable human rights and, even more, upon their capacities to claim them. The fundamental purpose of human rights learning is the development of the requisite consciousness and capacities of all women and men in all parts of the world. The most effective route to the fulfillment of that purpose is the learning and dialogue centered approach advocated by the Global Appeal for Human Rights Learning, signed by more than thirty world leaders and issued on December 10, 2004 by PDHRE.

Jeffery Sachs wrote that the *issues affecting cities in the face of rapid decentralization, democratization, and globalization were crucially important to developing countries*. In order to achieve the far-reaching MDGs and solve these issues, the Secretary-General is asking all developing countries to adopt a comprehensive national strategy bold enough to achieve the MDGs by 2015 and to mobilize all its resources behind that strategy. We at PDHRE, drawing on our experience in the field, claim that the answer lies is the learning about human rights across all sectors of society.

Even though human rights are being enunciated, in discussions about the MDG approach there is no development approach to the human rights agenda. The Global Appeal for Human Rights Learning proposes a viable strategy, for truly achieving the freedoms from fear and want.

The global Appeal derives from PDHRE's long years of experience in initiating and facilitating human rights education with communities and organizations in all parts of the world. PDHRE has demonstrated that there is a robust, integral relationship between learning and empowerment. The participatory and autonomous learning of people intent on the realization of their inherent dignity has enabled them to develop awareness of their fundamental human rights and to acquire the capacities to achieve the changes necessary to realize them. There is no greater obstacle to the realization of human dignity than the extreme and chronic poverty that has inspired the MDGs. Human rights learning is the most effective route to building the capacities of the poor themselves, the claimants of those human rights integral to the MDGs.

There are questions raised that call for answers. Kofi Annan said that from pragmatic beginnings could emerge a visionary change of direction in the world. That was the opportunity and the challenge. Indeed the worldwide human rights cities program being developed by PDHRE is an answer to this challenge. In these cities the learning about human rights at the community level is an effective strategy for achieving human security and social, economic transformation, a pragmatic way to effect societal development and sustainable change. This work can mark the "dramatic changes" called for by the SG, and will strengthen a participatory MDG process.

Furthermore, discussions held by ECOSOC speak on building state capacity to meet the MDGs, including governance, institutions, human resources and human rights. What is missing in these discussions is the clear recognition that poverty is the negation of dignity and of development and is a human rights violation. Poverty denies the capacity to achieve human rights, and to assure good governance. Poverty negates the human rights to live in dignity. Human rights learning in effect is human rights capacity-building to meet the MDGs. Learning is the acquisition of human rights. Learning is development. The notion of development is only 60 years old and we can consciously through community actions develop a common vision for development. The learning about human rights is a key issue which should be addressed and assessed by heads of States in the Millenium+5 Summit.

The SG report speaks of human rights as essential to achieving the MDGs. However, it does not say how human rights can be used for achieving the MDG. The report does not speak of the operationalization of the HR dimension of our future. On the other hand PDHRE takes a development approach to the acquisition of human dignity through human rights learning. Others have noted the integral relationships between human rights and the MDGs. They have advocated a human rights based approach to their implementation and have referred to them as *a human rights agenda*. These points of advocacy are evidence supporting the case for human rights learning as the primary method of capacity-building on the ground among those whose human rights are most severely deprived by ever worsening world poverty. It is, therefore, an urgent necessity that human rights learning be fully integrated into the implementation strategies, including the targets and indicators that comprise all programs and plans for the advancement of the Millennium Development Goals. Toward this end relevant human rights learning guidelines for the empowerment of the claimants should be adopted.

Current issues in the global agenda to which human rights learning may be regarded as of critical importance are the quest for global order and reforms aimed at shaping institutional changes:

- Post-conflict reconstruction of institutions and of governance. Human rights learning would mean evaluating past experience and will help to develop a sensitivity to human rights in order to build a community in which they can live in peace. Societies, more than ever need human rights learning if they are to move towards the future of living together.

- Sustainable development. Human beings must be central to its concerns. Through human rights learning communities can better equip themselves to evolve strategies for development which are sensitive to human rights. It is the deficit in human rights learning that creates a gap between what is professed and what is practiced.

Thus human rights learning through innovative programmes would be of critical relevance to some of the most important issues on the current agenda of the international community. Valuable inputs could be made to the discussions at the Summit next September presenting innovative proposals including how human rights learning could be an integral part of strategies to fulfill the Millennium Development Goals and also of their relevance to the important issues on the global agenda.

Learning/Empowerment Guidelines for Capacity-Building

We propose the following as the preliminary formulation of learning/empowerment guidelines for building the capacities of the claim holders to participate in all processes to implement the MDGs.

1. Assuring that claimants are provided with *fundamental components of human rights learning*, i.e.:

1.1. *Knowledge* of what universal human rights comprise and the mechanism and means for their promotion and protection; knowledge of the specific human rights related to each of the MDGs; knowledge of the interrelationships among all rights and among the eight goals and knowledge of the relationships between the holistic human rights framework and the general normative purposes of the MDGs. Such knowledge should be the content of a worldwide popular human rights education campaign based on the MDGs.

1.2. *Critical Awareness* of how the claimant's own lives and communities are affected by poverty; critical thinking skills to analyze the human rights deprivations they suffer and the human rights standards upon which to claim these respective rights from their governments or any agent or organization responsible for the denial.

1.3. *Political Skills* to assess the conditions in need of change and for organizing actions to claim rights and bring about changes toward the reduction and elimination of poverty.

2. Applying the critical pedagogy of popular education: *Core Questions* for an *Action Inquiry* to assess the particular conditions and causes of poverty that impede all or some of the targets of the MDGs in the claimants' communities and into the formulation of appropriate and effect indicators relevant to the particular claimants conditions; into the human rights standards their governments have ratified that relate to these particular conditions and causes and into effective national and local policies to achieve MDG targets and goals through the realization of human rights. Possible core questions that might be more elaborated and specified according to particular learning populations and communities are:

2.1. *On conditions of deprivation:* What is the condition of well-being of yourself, your family and your community? What needs do you experience or perceive to provide adequate nutrition, housing, health care (including infant, child and maternal health and HIV), education, equality between men and women and ethnic or religious groups, healthful environment? What can you find out about the causes for failure to meet any or all of these needs? What might be done to assure that they are met? Who can or should undertake action toward making the changes to meet the needs? What can you or your group contribute?

2.2. *On relevant human rights standards:* What international human rights standards that recognize these needs as rights have been ratified by your government? Which of these standards relate to each of the eight Millennium Development Goals? How can citizens secure accountability from the government for the fulfillment of the obligations undertaken in ratifying these standards? What intergovernmental agencies or non-governmental organizations might you enlist in a campaign to call the government to accountability so that the MDGs and the needs of your community might be met?

2.3. *On action for change:* What actions can citizens and civil society takes to assist governments in fulfilling human rights as a means to achieve the Millennium Development Goals? What actions can they take individually? What kind of preparation and/or training might be needed to prepare citizens to undertake these actions? Would your group or community undertake such training and initiate such action?

It is proposed that tools and materials for human rights learning to empower claim holders to act toward the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals be developed and empowerment training program be undertaken where ever possible throughout the world.

We call on ECOSOC towards its June meeting and the Millennium +5 meetings at the General Assembly in September to include the Global Appeal as informing a high priority and a strategy to achieve the MDGs.